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EDUCATION REPORT.

1 J. P. Adfield (S. S. Bathurst School) 22 Oct. 1848

SECOND REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS FOR THE BATHURST DISTRICT.

To the Warden and Councillors of the Bathurst District.

GENTLEMEN,—In accordance with your desire, expressed at your last Session of Council, I have prepared the following Report on the state of Common School Education in this District.

There are 120 Schools in operation at present under the provisions of the Common School Act in the Counties of Lanark and Renfrow. Since your Session in February, I have visited each of these Schools once, with a few exceptions for the most part of such as were not in operation when I was in their respective neighbourhoods;—some of them twice; and a few often.

The Schools, in general, are better attended from the middle of November to the end of April. All through those months they show to much better advantage than during the rest of the year. They have then the greatest number of Scholars in daily attendance; and among them, many may often be found of young persons both male and female varying from 15 to 20 years of age and upwards. During the other six months and a half the older pupils are kept at home to assist their parents in the agricultural employments in which the great majority of them are engaged. The Schools are comparatively almost deserted, having frequently, and that too in almost every Township, not more than 10 or 12 scholars in regular attendance;—often fewer;—in some instances not more than four or six little children just learning their letters, or reading words of one or two syllables. There are, certainly, some exceptions even during the Summer half of the year; but they are very few; by far too few to allow me to give a different statement. This is deeply to be regretted, as it interferes in a most disastrous way

with the education of the young. It discourages Teachers, and almost destroys the good effects of their labors. The pupils, so withdrawn from School, must necessarily lose much of what they had previously learned;—and though, when the busy season is over, they are again sent to School, the advantages of their attendance are seriously impaired by the absence to which they have been forced to submit. This is an evil which every friend of the young cannot but deplore; and which, so long as it is continued, must to a great extent thwart the best directed efforts of the most diligent and pains taking teachers.

In the course of my visits during the winter months, I was much gratified with the general improvement of the children, and with the attention and diligence of the Teachers. I found the Schools well attended, and the pupils apparently very desirous to improve themselves in the various branches of knowledge to which their attention was directed.

Amongst the Schools visited by me in the winter, it gives me great pleasure to notice with particular commendation that under the charge of Mr. Warren in the Township of McNab, whose pupils evinced a very decided improvement since my former visit in 1847,—and acquitted themselves most satisfactorily in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and English Grammar. Mr. Thompson's School in Bromley requires also especial notice, as being well conducted; and very creditable to him as a Teacher. In the Township of Lanark I was much pleased with the School taught by Mr. R. M. Hammond whose scholars sustained an examination in their several studies that proved most clearly the Teacher's care and the pupils' diligence. I have to notice also, with much satisfaction, Mr. McDougall's School in North Sherbrooke. In this somewhat remote Township there were 60 pupils in attendance at the School,

and 75 on the Teacher's daily roll. My journey to this School was through a rough and apparently thinly settled country. There was nothing to be seen around to indicate a School so numerously attended. My surprise and gratification were therefore equally great when the busy scene opened before me. On my arrival the Scholars were enjoying themselves in the open air during the intermission at noon; but in a few minutes they were collected together and arranged in the best order the very limited bounds of the School House would allow; and their examination showed that Mr. McDougal had not neglected his numerous charge. Mr. Morrison's School in Perth has sustained, during his Superintendence of it, a well deserved reputation. His system of instruction is admirable; and is alike calculated to excite and fix the present attention of the Scholar, and to promote his sure and steady improvement. It is to me, and to many, a source of regret that we are to lose his services as a Common School Teacher; and I feel assured that all who know him will join with me in the most sincere wishes for his future welfare.

The Teachers of several other Schools may also be noticed with commendation, among whom may be named Mr. Heely of Carleton Place, Mr. James Poole, and Mr. Yorke of Ramsay, Mr. McDougal of Beckwith, Mr. Lindsay of the same Township and Mr. Thos. Poole of Pakenham.

If I do not now mention other Teachers by name, it is not because I think slightly of their labors, or undervalue their services. I trust it will yet be in my power to make honorable mention of many who labor diligently and patiently in their vocation, and whose pupils will doubtless soon evince such improvement under their care as will merit especial notice in some future report.

There are a few young men lately entered upon the important and responsible duties of Common School Teachers, who give fair promise of becoming an important acquisition to the District as instructors of youth. I trust they will receive from

those who employ them that respect and encouragement so powerfully calculated to lighten their labors, and to give to their endeavours a successful issue.

The School Houses throughout the District are in general much too small for convenience and comfort. They are, for the most part, built of logs,—not more than 20 feet square, and seldom 8 feet high. Many are much smaller and of less height. And in each of these are crowded together during the winter months from 25 to 40 children. The interior arrangements are often very defective, increasing the labor of teachers, and retarding the improvement of the Scholars. It is much to be desired that some regular and fixed plan were adopted by competent authority, showing in detail the most suitable size, height, and fitting up of School Houses. And I would strongly recommend it to the consideration of the Council whether it would not tend to the promotion of learning if they would adopt some By-law, having for its object, the carrying out of such improvements, to be made operative upon all parties applying to them for sums of money "to be levied for the purchasing of School sites, and the erection and furnishing of School Houses." At present, where money is levied for these purposes, the duty of seeing it expended is often entrusted to incompetent, or selfish, or obstinate persons, who effect much less with it than might be accomplished with the same sum of money, under a well devised and known plan. I have no desire to advocate unnecessary expenditure; but I am anxious to see a well arranged and sufficiently commodious class of School Houses superseding many, in various parts of the District, now used as such; but which, from want of room and other requisites, are quite unfit for the purpose. If the inhabitants of School Sections would but lose sight of their merely personal interest in matters of this kind,—if they would unite for the general good of their Sections,—if they would sacrifice a little present time, or some trifling, passing enjoyment, to aid in the erection and proper furnishing of good and substantial build-

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lay would be much less,—it would be al-
most unnecessary to have recourse to Sec-
tional Assessment,—and the good effects
would soon be apparent in the more cer-
tain efficiency of united efforts for the bet-
ter instruction of the rising generation.

There are a few good and tolerably com-
modious School Houses in the District.
Amongst these may be mentioned, one on
the south side of Perth; and one in the
same town erected this summer, but not
yet quite finished. These are frame build-
ings. They are both respectable as to size,
but the interior arrangements of the former
are much less commodious than they might
have been made at a very trifling addition-
al expense. Those of the latter I have not
yet seen. There is another at Smith's
Falls, built of stone, which if finished as it
ought to be, would be the best in the Dis-
trict, and would indeed reflect credit upon
the zeal and judgment of those concerned
in its erection. But to the reproach of the
Section, and to their increased yearly ex-
penditure, it is suffered to remain in an un-
finished state. A high rent is paid for a
miserable building, in which the School is
kept, insufficient in size, and, when I visit-
ed it, in a bad state of repair.

There are also a few good log School
Houses in some of the Townships. In
Bathurst, at the head of the sixth line, the
school is taught in a spacious and sufficient-
ly lofty log building, which with a little im-
provement would make a handsome and
comfortable School House. There is ano-
ther in the same Township on the 8th line.
In Beckwith there are three or four good
log School Houses, a very good one in
Westmeath, and another in Pembroke. Of
the rest, not before alluded to, many are
too small, and some few are ill-built and
worse furnished; exhibiting in loose and
shattered floors, broken windows, ill-con-
structed desks, unsafe stoves, and stove
pipes, and unplastered walls, an amount of
disregard to the health and comfort of the
young, and the credit of the neighbourhood
in which they are situated, that argues a
most culpable apathy on the subject of edu-

cation.

True, it is the duty of the Trustees of
School Sections "to do whatever may be
expedient with regard to building, repair-
ing, renting, renewing, warming or keeping
in order the School House and its appen-
dages, lands, and moveable property which
shall be held by them;" but to do this re-
quires means, and the active co-operation
of the inhabitants of their Sections; and
these it is not easy, in many instances, to
obtain. Trustees are unwilling to act on
their own responsibility; to involve them-
selves in trouble with their neighbours;
and to provoke opposition by proposing and
carrying out the necessary remedial mea-
sures at the general expense. And thus,
too frequently, but little is done towards
"repairing, furnishing, and keeping the
School House in order." As yet, the
Trustees of Schools are hardly aware of the
magnitude and importance of the duties the
Common School Act imposes upon them.
And the people are still less conscious of
the powers with which Trustees are in-
vested, but which they seldom exercise to
the extent authorised by the Act.
On the subject of text books to be used
in the Schools, and which may be selected
by the Trustees "from a list of Books, made
out by the Board of Education under the
sanction of the Governor in Council," I
have to observe that a greater uniformity
is beginning to prevail. Where this provi-
sion of the Act is carefully attended to the
advantages are plainly manifest, and the
improvement of the children is certain and
rapid in proportion. This is a point of high
importance, but one too little thought of.
Every person at all acquainted with the
business of education, knows that where
proper books are used, and the children
judiciously classed, a Teacher can effect
more in one month, with greater ease to
himself, and more pleasure to the learner,
than he could under less favorable circum-
stances in three. Many parents are not
aware of the great loss of time occasioned
by the diversity of books used by their chil-
dren at School;—and in School affairs,
especially in such settlements as ours,

where the children are so often kept at home to assist their parents, the loss of time is the loss of money, and of what is infinitely more valuable than money,—the improvement of the mind thirsting for knowledge. I recollect visiting one School last winter, at which 15 children were present, no two of whom had books of the same kind. Each had to be heard separately,—no class was formed in it,—every one was cut off, as it were, from his school fellows;—there was no community of studies,—no emulation,—no desire to excel on the part of the Scholars; and an almost endless and certainly most tiresome round of lifeless repetition of isolated lessons to be listened to on the part of the Teacher. I am not willing to allude further to this ill provided School; and hope that those connected with it have long ago exerted themselves to supply the necessary books for their children, and to show that they have at least a *desire* for their improvement.

The quarterly examination, if properly conducted, and duly attended, would prove of great value as incitements to care and attention in the Teacher, and to diligence and improvement in the scholar. But hitherto, with few exceptions, they have been almost a dead letter. In many instances not a single person has been present to show the least feeling of interest in the advancement made by the scholars, beyond, perhaps, a solitary Trustee. Sometimes I hear of a Clergyman, a Magistrate, or a Councillor being present on such occasions, but too seldom is the Teacher cheered in his difficult and arduous duties by the attendance of anxious and interested parents to witness the progress their children have made, and to encourage them in the attainment of that useful knowledge which they are anxious to obtain but have so little time to acquire. Whether or not, the Teachers do their part in sending the necessary notices, I cannot say; if they do not much of the blame must, of course, rest with them.

I have no doubt it would conduce to the encouragement and improvement of the

Scholars if arrangements were entered into by three or four Teachers in any particular locality to attend the quarterly examinations in each of their Schools. To effect this it would only be necessary to hold the examinations in their several schools, on different days, towards the end of each quarter, so as to give to each Teacher an opportunity of being present at the Schools of his brethren. Nor would the time thus spent be lost,—for each Teacher would probably see something to admire and to imitate in the system or success of his fellow teachers;—parents also might, perhaps, by this means, be induced to come forward; and the children, in the expectation of such witnesses to their quarterly advancement in their several studies, would labor to acquit themselves with credit and would thus be sure to make a more satisfactory progress than is to be looked for under the present system of almost universal inattention to this wise provision of the Law.

But upon the whole, in spite of these various hinderances, our Common Schools are undoubtedly improving. Though too little still,—there is yet more attention paid to the important subject of elementary education than in past years. In the course of time it is to be hoped a more lively regard will be awakened, better School Houses will be built, more care and discrimination will be exercised in the election of Trustees, parents will become more alive to their duties, and all persons will unite to promote so desirable an end as the placing of sound and useful instruction in necessary knowledge within the reach of the poorest child in the land.

I have the honor to be,
Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

J. PADFIELD, S.C.S.

Bathurst District.

2nd October, 1848.

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Bathurst District.